THE PARABLE OF THE MAGPIES.

THIS is an *Age of Riddles*, the World is become a mere Fairy-Land, inhabited by Chimera's, Monsters, Elfes and Changelings; Men act as if they were at *Cross Purposes*, and therefore wonder not if the Press brings forth *Parables*.

The late Prevarication and Flight of a certain *Overseer* of the *Levites* in a small Island, puts me in mind of a Tale, which is not to be found in all *Æsop's Fables*, and yet it runs much after the same manner. Take it as follows:

There was a time when all the *Birds in the Air* were summon'd to swear Allegiance to the *EAGLE*, whom by unanimous consent, they had chosen to be their King. The *OSTRIDGE* who reign'd over them before, having deserted his Government, (as is the manner of that unnatural Bird,) and so left the Throne vacant. Now the *EAGLE* had gain'd the Hearts and Affections of almost all the *feather'd* Kinds: The *Falcons*, *Herns*, *Storks*, *Swallows*, *Larks*, and innumerable other sorts of High-flying Birds came in and *took the Oath*, especially the *Black-birds*, were very prompt and ready to give all the Demonstrations of their Loyalty they were capable of. To these join'd the *Nightingales*, and *Thrushes*, a harmless chearful sort of Birds, that were

always merry in the midſt of Afflictions, and wou'd ſing beſt when prick'd with Briars and Thorns. They all ſwore Loyalty to the *EAGLE*, charpt and carol'd his Praiſes, ſo that the Hills and Valleys, Forreſts and Plains, eccho'd his Renown: They alſo formed themſelves into *Troops*, and had the over-ſight of all inferior *Magpies*, & follow'd him to the Wars; for the *abdicated OSTRICH* having fled to the *VULTURE* for protection, and made a League with Him, came with huge Armies and invaded the *Eagles Dominions*; But the *Black-birds*, *Nightingales* and *Thruſhes*, as I have ſaid, ſtood firm to Him, and drove away his Enemies, being reſolved never to forſake Him, till they have ſubdued the *OSTRICH* and the *VULTURE*, with all that adhere to them.

Now among all the *Birds* that lived under the Eagles Government; none were ſo Treacherous and Diſloyal as ſome *MAGPIES*, a Bird of two colours, Double-Tongu'd, and much addicted to Quibbles and mental Reſervations; yet ſome of theſe took the *Oath of Allegiance* to the *EAGLE*: But others ſtood out, and chatter'd againſt it, ſquinting at all ſuch as took it. There was one *Old One* that had his Neſt by a River-ſide, he was the *Ring-leader of the Nonſwearing* MAGPIES, a ſurly Old Maggot that wou'd not come near the *EAGLES* Court, nor ſo much as chatter out a How-d'ye to Him, but kept hiving in's Neſt under pretence of Illneſs. To him there reſorted daily the other *Non-ſwearing* MAGPIES, with great numbers of *Jack-daws*, *Rooks*, *Swallows* and *Martins*, that the MAGPIES had drawn into their Sedition. From him they receiv'd Inſtructions, and took their Meaſures, how to behave themſelves in their ſeveral reſpective Diſtricts, (for ſome of them were DIGNIFY'D MAGPIES, *Jackdaws*, *Rooks*, *Swallows*, and *Martins*, in ſuch and ſuch a Province of the Eagles Dominions,) and when they had ſufficiently learn'd their Cue, away they flew to their Charges, and made it their buſineſs to preach up *Non-ſwearing*, *Non-obeying*, *Non-fighting*, &c. as formerly they had done *Non-reſiſting*; for all their Doctrines ran upon *Nons* and *Negatives*, the Daughters of *Paſſive Obedience*.

By theſe Arts they drew to their Party great Numbers of *Geeſe*, *Owls*, *Buzzards*, and ſuch like *ſilly* Birds, who flutter'd together at certain times, & kept their *Night Cabals*, plotting Treaſon againſt the EAGLE, and contriveing how to reſtore the *Abdicated OSTRICH* to the Crown. To this end, they held a private Correſpondence with Him, and the VULTURE inviting them to ſend an Army to invade the EAGLES Dominions, and promiſing them all manner of Aſſiſtance and readineſs to join with them at their firſt Appearance.

Amongſt the reſt of the *Dignify'd MAGPIES* concern'd in this Plot, there was one *arch Wagg* more active than the reſt, who having learn'd the way of training up Pidgeons to carry Letters (as is uſual at *Aleppo* and *Babylon*,) writ two Letters, one to the OSTRICH, and another to his Mate.

Mate. The Tenor whereof is as follows:

To the OSTRICH.

SIR,

THE PIDGEON *who brings this Dispatch, will be our Credentials, in giving you such an Assurance of our unfeign'd Duty and Fidelity, as will be adequate to your very Wishes: Yet pardon an Error, which (if it be one,) is the effect of my Ambition; to satisfy you from my own Mouth, and give you this Testimony under my* Claw, *That I shall snatch every opportunity, not slighting the least, and laying wait for the greatest, to acquit our selves your devoted Friends.*

SIR! *I write in the* Plural, *because I deliver the sense of the* Chief MAGPIE *as well as mine own, and the others of our Nest; who the diminisht in number, yet, if our Arithmetick does not fail us, we have no Cyphers amongst us, but are making a progression in our Interests, that is,* in yours.

The Bearer will, I presume, give you a true Character of us, when he shall satisfy you, That we are really what we speak our selves,

Decemb. 31. *Yours intirely*

I wish you the merriest New-Year.

To the OSTRICH'S Mate.

AS I am not able to chatter out *the unparallell'd Complacency I took this time Twelve-month, in receiving that Token of your Condescension and Clemency, under your own* Claw. *So I have hopt about ever since in no small uneasiness, for want of the means to return you my humble Thanks, and renew new my solemn Protestations of unfeigned Loyalty. From which, if I ever flinch, may my* Wings be clipt, *and I be never able to mount above a* Grashoppers Leap *from the Ground. This I declare in the Name of the* Chief MAGPY, *and the rest of our Feather, as well as on my own score. You may repose an entire confidence in us, not only for our unchangeable Fastness in the Practice of so just and well-grounded a Resolution; But also for our most vigorous endeavours to advance your Cause,* which is our own, *beyond the possibility of a Separation.*

There is no necessity, that I should particularize, since the Pidgeon *who bears this, can and will discover to you the bottom of our Hearts. I wish you could penetrate into them, to behold the Sincerity and Devotion with which we consecrate our selves to your Service. I wish you a* jolly New-Year, *and numerous, a very numerous sequel of them, and all very merry ones. Your* Young Heir *we hear is well fledg'd, he has our most passionate Vows. His Friends encrease daily, and his Adversaries lose ground.*

Decemb. 31.

After *Margery* had writ these Letters, (for you must note by the way, that these things were done, when *Birds and Beasts* were as good Scholars as men,) he began to *whet his Bill*, plume his Feathers, and hop about, to the Tune of *Packington's Pound*. He thought he had conquer'd the World, and got both the *Indies* in his *Claws*. But alack and well aday! the *Pidgeon* that carry'd 'em was seiz'd, and all the Roguery discover'd, and *poor MAG* was fain to hop out of sight for't. For the EAGLE had a Cock belonging to him, who was very wakeful, and his Name was *Chanticleer*: This Cock had always a shrewd Eye to the MAGPIES, and their Gang; he watch'd all their motions, so that they could hardly mute, but he was privy to't. 'Twas he that seiz'd on the *Pidgeon*, and brought him to the EAGLES Palace, loaden with Letters to the OSTRICH and the VULTURE; among the rest were these two of *Margery's own penning*. Upon which *Margery* very prudently chang'd Colours, and turn'd his White and Black into a *deep Red*, and so flew away toward the VULTURE'S Territories, there to chatter at large the Contents of his fawning Letters.

This MAGPY had the Character of a flattering, selfish perfidious, insinuating Bird: He it was that formerly Crown'd the OSTRICH, and being afterwards discontented at the OSTRICHE'S Government, with others of his Feather, sent and invited the EAGLE to come and rescue them from the *OSTRICHE'S* Tyranny; But as soon as he had gratify'd them in that, and the EAGLE had by the general consent of all the Birds, taken possession of the *OSTRICHE'S* vacant Throne, this False-hearted MAGPY and his Complices turn tail, squint at his Proceedings, slight his Favour, and make such a *Chattering*, that all the honest Birds were justly offended at the Noise. Yet some of the *OSTRICHE'S* Creatures began to listen to them with delight, and such Artifice was used, that many simple, well-meaning Birds, were deluded into the MAGPIES *Faction*.

It ought to be remember'd here, That there was an old Grudge between the *MAGPIES* and the *BLACK-BIRDS*, the former being conscious of the harsh, grating Noise they made, envyed and persecuted the latter with their Followers, the *Nightingales* and *Thrushes*, because of the *sweet harmonious Notes they sung in the* Woods *and* Groves, which drew all the Birds into Admiration of their Melody! So that multitudes of the MAGPIES Party abandon'd them, and went over to the *Black-birds*: Nay, some of the MAGPIES themselves were so enamour'd of the *Black-birds* Musick and innocent manner of Life, that they voluntarily underwent a Metamorphosis and became *Black-birds*: But there were but few of these, and they were of the inferiour MAGPIES. However, the great ones were highly incens'd at this Desertion of some of their own Feather, and whole *Coveys* of their Followers: Whereupon they got the OSTRICHES, EAGLES,

or whosoever was King of the Birds at that time, to erect *High-Commission Courts*, Star-Chambers, and other Seats of Judicature, whither the *Blackbirds* were cited, and there were sentenc'd to Imprisonment, pecuniary Mulcts, and whatsoever else the *MAGPIES* pleas'd to inflict on them. This grew in time to be a great Grievance in the *Common-wealth of Birds*; so that in process of time, these Animosities were improv'd into a Civil War. During which, the *Chief MAGPY* (even the Predecessor of him whom I before mention'd, the Old surly Non-swearing MAGPY, whose Nest was by a River-side,) lost his Head, for endeavouring to force the *Black-birds* to wear his Colours, and for other illegal Impositions against the Laws of Nature, and the general sense of all the Birds in the Air. After him the whole Generation of *MAGPIES* went to Pot; except such as would turn *Black-birds*.

But in twelve years time the *MAGPIE'S* Interest fac'd about again, and they fell to their old Trade of Domineering, Persecuting, and Tyrannizing over the *Blackbirds*: Which continu'd till the *OSTRICH* came to be Crown'd; when he for his own Ends took the Lash out of the *MAGPIES CLAWS*, at which they chatter'd and snapt with their Bills, huff'd and bounc'd; and tho they themselves had brought the *OSTRICH* to the Throne, yet now they grew weary of Him, and never wou'd be at quiet, till they had chased him away again, and brought the *EAGLE* to the Crown; and because he wou'd not countenance their oppression of the *Black-birds*, therefore they forsook him also, and his Interest, and endeavour'd to calumniate the Loyalty, Service and Zeal of the *Blackbirds*, who stood stoutly to him at all turns.

During these *Bickerings* and ill Offices between the *MAGPIES* and the *Black-birds*, it was thought convenient, that a Publick Convocation of the former, should be call'd for an *Accommodation*. But all came to nothing; for the Prolocutor of the *MAGPIES*, having scrap'd the Ground with his *Reverend Claws*, and almost kiss'd it with a submissive Bow of his learned Noddle; made an Oration to this Effect, *That if the least Feather or Straw were pluck'd out of their old weather-beaten Nest*, all wou'd either fall to the ground, or be blown away by the Wind, and so their young ones would be forc'd to take shelter in the *Blackbirds Quarters*. To this eloquent Harangue, the rest of the *MAGPIES* all said *Amen*. And so the matter lies where it did before, between two Stools. *Sub judice Lis est*. Yet 'tis thought that if the *Blackbirds* could but obtain a fair and equal hearing of their Cause, they would soon make the *MAGPIES* asham'd of their Tyrannous, proud, covetous Actions; and convince the World that those *Pye-bald* Birds regarded nothing but the satisfaction of their Ambitious Designs, Self-will, Lust and Avarice.

These

Theſe cunning *PIES* will not alwayes appear above board themſelves, but are in Fee with *Hawks*, *Falcons*, and ſuch like Birds of Prey, who are their Setters for any Game. Thus they once employ'd a hundred and ſeventeen of theſe *Ravenous Birds* to joyn in a Petition to the *Eagle's* Grand Council of State, againſt the *Phœnix*, who was made Governour over the *Eagle's* Chief Grove, and had kept his Place for two years together, but becauſe he was a faithful Friend, and Loyal Subject to the *Eagle*, and was entring upon his *third year* of Government, the *Magpies* chatter'd, and ſet the *Hawks* and *Falcons* to ſcream againſt him, who diſgorg'd a world of falſe and frivolous Accuſations in the Council Houſe, but all came to nothing, for that Loyal Senate would not countenance the Envious Calumnies of Male-contents. This made the *MAGPIES* and the reſt of their Gang ſtark mad, to ſee the *Phœnix* ſhine brighter for their Perſecution: So now they reſolv'd to hazard all at once, and make quick work on't. The *Oſtrich* muſt be ſent for over in all haſte, and the more to encourage him, they invited him to come as ſoon as the *Eagle* was gone to viſit ſome of his Allies and Friends abroad. Now the *MAGPIES* hopt about, longing for the day when the *Eagle* would take his flight beyond Sea, being then in their own Conceits, cock-ſure of reſtoring the *OSTRICH* again to his Crown. But as I have told you before, poor Pilgarlick the *Pigeon* that was to carry the News to the *Oſtrich*, was caught in a Gin, with Two of his Companions, and out comes all the Treaſon. Theſe were all try'd for their Lives, and one of them was condemn'd to be choak'd with *Hempſeed*: Now when the day of Execution was come, this *Pigeon* fell ſick with the very ſmell of the *Hempſeed*, and deſir'd that a certain *MAGPY*, a Friend of his, would chatter over a Form of Prayer that was uſed among the *Magpies* in the *Viſitation of the ſick*. So the *Magpy* chatter'd, and the Pigeon coo'd, and having finiſh'd their Devotions, the *Pigeon very orderly* took his Hempſeed, which ſoon ſpoil'd his Cooing for ever after, to the great grief of the *Magpies* and their Gang. It would even grieve ones Heart to ſee how the *MAGPIES* ſneakt about after this fatal Blow? How humble and downiſh they look'd, not jetting it along as they us'd to do, and looking over your head, but in a more ſubmiſſive Poſture, *like good your Worſhip on a Wooden Leg*, or like an Owl in an Ivy-Buſh, that cares not to be ſeen. *Alas poor Mag!* a Cup of Sack for Mag! Mag's a Rogue, ah poor Mag, Mag, Mag, not a word of the Pudding. *Mag's at hide and ſeek*, and all the Gang are in a Spiritual Maze, as mute as Mum chance, that was hang'd for ſaying of nothing. What is become of the *ſeven Golden Candel ſticks?* Why, by my Sol Man, I'ſt believe they'l aw turn Prince's

Metal.

Metal in a short time, or the D— hale 'em by the Broad Lugs to H—.

Good morrow Mr. Mayor of *Queenborough*. Slap, says the Casement, down falls the leaden two pence. Confound your Worship, *SIR*.

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London, Printed for *B. Griffiths,* 1691.